Final Report

Race, Class, Ethnicity and the Changing Economy: Deindustrialization and New Buffalo, 1940--1980

A Mapping Project

by

Henry L. Taylor

The purpose of this project was to show the population distribution, flow of population movement, and pattern of residential concentration for select white ethnic groups and African Americans in Buffalo, New York for the period between 1940 and 1980. In particular, the project wanted to emphasize the flow of population movement over time and the pattern of racial and ethnic concentration in Buffalo and to show the relationship between the city's residential map and its changing economic structure. Another big goal of this project was to produce a series of maps that not only accurately depicted the distribution of the city's population, its concentration and its movement over time, but also to produce a series of maps that were "visually" appealing to the public. The maps were designed by Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., with assistance from Susan Turner, Senior Planner at the Greater Buffalo Development Corporation, and Christopher Forman, the project cartographer. The maps were drawn by Christopher Forman.

Data and Methodology.

Data.

The project relied on census tract data prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Census to determine the residential location of white ethnic groups and African

Americans for the period between 1940 and 1980. Data were collected on all white ethnic groups, Hispanics, and African Americans for each of the decennial decades in the period. There were some problems with the census tract data that made us cautious. To begin, it was very difficult to separate the white ethnic population from the native white population. The census data show white ethnic breakdowns only in select census tracts and, in those tracts, the categories include single ancestry, multiple ancestry, ancestry not specified, not reported, as well as categories that show the mixtures of the dominant white ethnic groups with other ethnic groups. For instance, the data will say, "French and other groups", "Irish and other groups," etc..

The problem is that when the numbers of these various groups are added together the sum is greater than the total number of whites living in the census tract. Given the nature of the data, we found it impossible to accurately distinguish between the number of white ethnic and native whites living within a single census tract. So, we are not really sure what proportion of a given ethnic group actually lived in a select census tract. Most importantly we had to decide which of these various categories of white ethnic groups we were going to represent in the mapping project. Since we were really dealing with a question of the "nativity" of Buffalo's foreign born population, it seemed appropriate to base our mapping project on the "single ancestry category," i.e. Irish, Germans, etc.

Another problem encountered was the way in which certain white ethnic groups were classified by the census bureau and how that classification system changed over time. For example, in 1940 the bureau had separate categories for the

Irish "free" state and the residents of Northern Ireland. In 1980 the census bureau simply listed the "Irish" as the "Irish." To overcome this problem, we combined for 1940 both the natives of the Irish "free" state and Northern Ireland into a single group, "the Irish."

One final note. The population figures for the Irish are questionable. For example, in 1940 there were 4,256 individuals from the Irish "free" state and Northern Ireland. In 1970 the census bureau listed 5,031 individuals that were natives of Ireland. And the 1980 census shows 19,168 Irish natives. This is a big jump from 1970 to 1980. We found it difficult to believe that the population grew this fast. We doubled checked the figures, and they held up. Nevertheless, we are still suspicious. At any rate, even if the figures are inflated, we do not think that they distort either the pattern of population concentration or the direction of population movement. For example, the areas where the Irish are concentrated on the maps are known to be the residential locations of this ethnic group. The point is this: although the population figures are questionable, we do not believe that the questionable data kept us from meeting our goal of producing a series of maps that showed the population distribution, flow of population movement, and pattern of residential concentration for the Irish in 1940 and 1980.

There were no significant problems with the figures for the other white ethnic groups and African Americans. Although there may be some under or over count, we believe that the data is accurate enough to correctly show the pattern of distribution and the direction of population movement for the various population groups represented on the maps. (See Tables 1 and 2).

Table One

Irish, German, English, Polish and Italian

Population of Buffalo, New York

1940 and 1980

Year	Irish	German	English	Polish	Italian
1940	4,256	12,483	5,233	20,545	17,847
1980	19,168	26,234	10,618	44,802	34,674

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Table Two

African American Population

of Buffalo, New York

1940-1980

Year	Total Population	African Americans	Percent pop.
1940	575,901	17,694	3.07
1950	580,132	36,645	6.32
1960	532,759	70,904	13.31
1970	462,768	94,329	20.38
1980	357,870	94,262	26.30

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Method.

A big question facing us at the onset of this project was "Do we map the residential location and population movement of the entire white ethnic and coloured populations?" Or do we map the residential location and population movement of select white ethnic and coloured population groups? Pragmatism answered this question. Because of the large number of white ethnic groups living in Buffalo during the period and because of the small number of Hispanics and other coloured groups living in Buffalo in 1940, we decided to only map the residential location and population movement of select white ethnic groups and of African Americans. Among the white ethnic groups, we decided to map only the residential location and population movement of the five largest white ethnic groups: the Irish, Germans, Polish, Italians, and English.

Next, we had to decide how many of the decades between 1940 and 1980 to map. Again, pragmatism provided the answer. Drawing, on a single map, the residential location of all ethnic groups was too problematic. And drawing decennial maps for each of the five ethnic groups (a total of 25 maps) was too expensive. So, we decided to produce maps for only two decades: 1940 and 1980. Such a "then and now" perspective would still give us a sense of the population movement of the five ethnic groups over time, as well as a sense of how the influx of thousands of African Americans into Buffalo altered the city's social map. At the same time, we decided to produce a series of five maps to show the residential distribution of African Americans for the

entire forty year period between 1940 through 1980.

The Areal Scaling Methodology.

One goal of this project was to produce a series of visually attractive maps that would appeal to a museum audience. We decided that "colored" circles, rather than dots, would be the best way to achieve this goal. An Areal Scaling Methodology was used in to symbolically represent the city's black and white ethnic populations.

In this method, a standard scale was selected for all of the maps (approximately 1.25 in. = 1 Mile). The areal scaling method was used to determine the actual circle size used in representing the different population groups. In developing the circles we ran into an unanticipated problem. Because of big differences between the size of the African American population and the population of the various ethnic groups, it was necessary to vary the size of the circles from map to map, although the scale used in determining the size of the different circles did not vary on the black and white ethnic maps For example, if a circle with a diameter of 1 inch equaled 500 people on a black population map, then that same circle size would represent 500 people on all black population maps. And a circle with a diameter of 2 inches equals 800 people on both Polish and German maps (see appendix A). Nevertheless, because of differences in the magnitude of the different population groups, we had to use different size circles to represent the different population groups on the maps. If the same size circles were used to represent all groups, most maps would have had circles that were barely visible.

Consequently, it is not possible to compare the different maps in terms of population size. However, it is possible to compare the various maps in terms of their population pattern, concentration and movement. Finally, although the maps were based on the actual population figures, approximate population figures were used in the actual construction of the maps. The areal scaling method uses "interval" numbers in determining the size of circles used to represent a given population group (see Appendix A).

Findings.

The most striking finding of the mapping project is the impact that the migration of blacks into Buffalo had on the city's social map. A second important finding is the remarkable stability of the residential enclaves of the white ethnic groups; that is, other than the Germans. The migration of thousands of African Americans into the city between 1940 and 1980 transformed the social map of Buffalo. Over this forty year period blacks came to dominate the residential area sandwiched between Main and Bailey, to the East and West, and William Street and Winspear, to the South and North. By 1980 this area was approximately 70 percent black. At the same time, by 1980 the maps show that some African Americans had been dispersed. They were now living in other parts of the city. Concentration and dispersal are both characteristic features of the evolution of Buffalo's post-1940 black community.

The groups most affected by the influx of African Americans into Buffalo were the Germans and the Polish. The German population experienced the greatest displacement; the expanding black population literally pushed them out of the East End. The expanding black population also pushed the Polish

population toward the far east section of the city. Still, by 1970, the Polish population were dominating much of the residential space to the east of Fillmore, between Best and William Streets. However, field trips into the area suggest that this is changing. The 1990 census will probably show African Americans dominating this area.

The ethnic enclaves of the Irish, Italians, English and even the Polish, living South of William appear very stable. Between 1940 and 1980 there were no major shifts in the residential location of these ethnic groups. The Irish and Polish are still concentrated in the old industrial districts of South Buffalo, with a large Polish concentration also found in the northern industrial sector. The Italians are still concentrated in the West Side and the English are still found in North Buffalo. So, in spite of the city's changing economic structure and the influx of thousands of African Americans into the city, the social map of Buffalo appears stable. Nevertheless, there are signs of change. Field trips to these areas combined with informal discussions with local residents suggest that many of those remaining may be older citizens who cannot leave the area. Still, the traditional residential enclaves of the various white ethnic groups - with the exception of the Germans - have retained their historic significance.

Finally, the mapping project gives us some insight into the relationship between work and residence in Buffalo. The Polish, for example, dominated the ranks of skilled workers in Buffalo, and they were also the white ethnic group most heavily concentrated in the industrial sectors of the city. This residential location meant a very short journey-to-work for members of the Polish industrial proletariate. These Polish workers may have been given preferential treatment in housing. The Irish were also concentrated in the

industrial sections of the city.

The English, on the other hand, were concentrated in North Buffalo, an area dominated by middle and upper income residential enclaves. Again, this indicates that members of this ethnic group were probably concentrated among the city's economic elites. The East Side was characterized by housing that fell into the lower middle- and working class categories, which also suggest that many of the Germans living in this region might have been shopkeepers, clerks, and the owners of small businesses. African Americans formed their community in the Swan and Eagle streets area where they worked in the homes of Buffalo's elites at the turn of the century. As the African American population grew, it expanded into that section of the city where housing was the cheapest. The picture is less clear for the Italians. Perhaps their West Side concentration is indicative of employment opportunities along the Buffalo waterfront. Although the research needed to validate these speculations was beyond the scope of this project, the mapping project does provide some interesting hypotheses for those who might wish to pursue the subject.

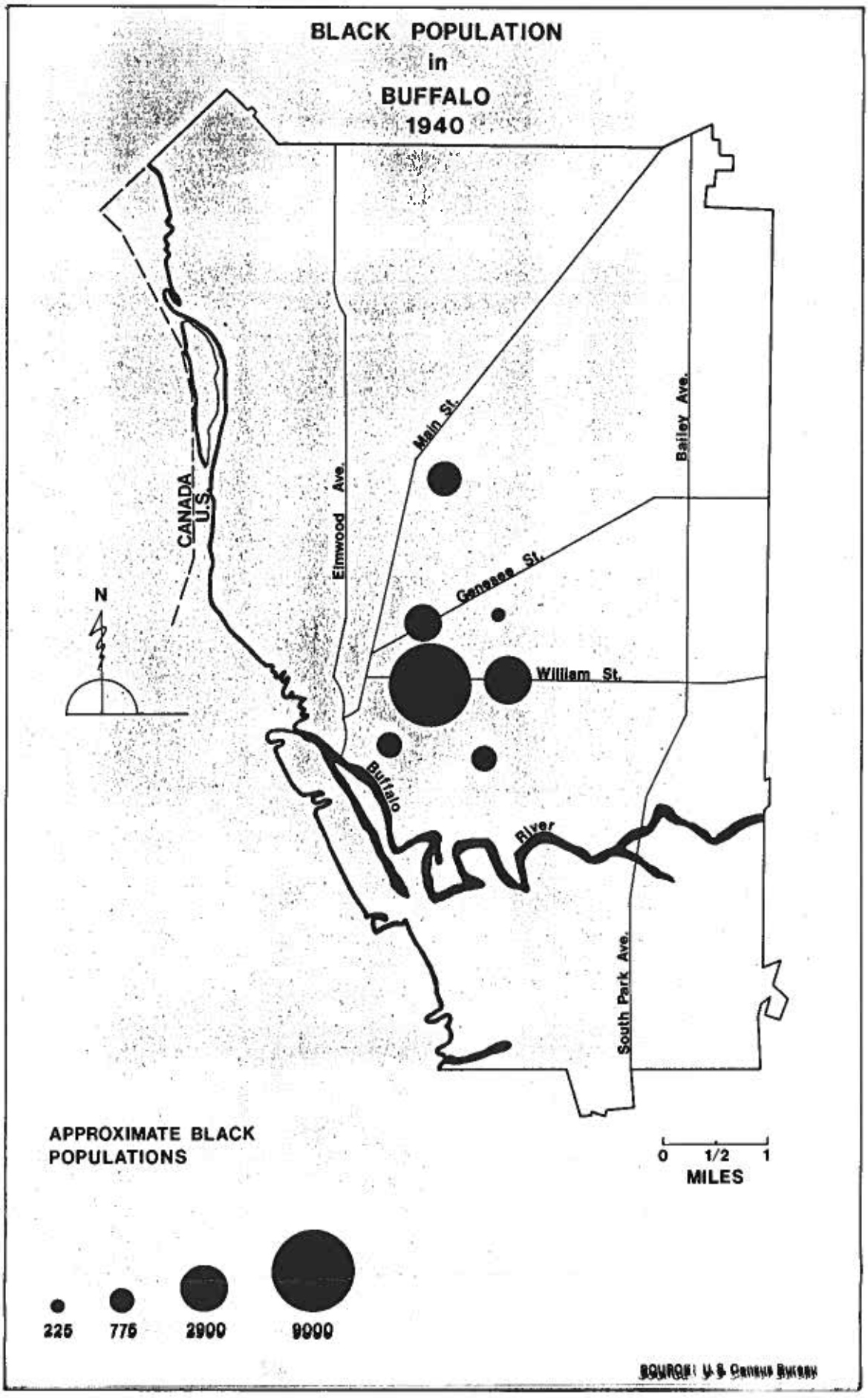
In this process you get 49. The square root of 49 is 7; so you move the decimal to get .7 and find it on the circle template. Finally, the population figures used in the legends are approximate because more than one number can fit into a circle. For instance, if you return to the first example, if the number had been 2589 instead of 2541, you would still use a .5 circle. So each circle is actually an interval of numbers, which is given an average, rounded off value.

The actual circle sizes were standardized for each population group. So, a circle that represents X number of people on a black population map will represent that number on all of the black population maps. For example, if a circle with a diameter of 1 inch equaled 850 people on a black population map, that same size circle would represent 850 people on all of the black population maps. Likewise, the circle size for white ethnic groups was standardized. So a circle representing 500 people on a Polish map will also represent 500 people on a German map.

Although the same method was used in the construction of all the black and white ethnic population maps, there are variation among the maps. The maps differ because of the wide variation in both the size of the population groups and in the distribution of these groups across the city's 72 census tracts. The maps are different because of the uniqueness of each population group. Yet, within this variation consistency was sought. For example, in creating the legends, the smallest and largest circle for each map was used as the first and last circles in the legend. Then two well represented circles were used as the middle circles in the legend. Again, because of the great differences in the population size of the different groups, the circle sizes were varied. If

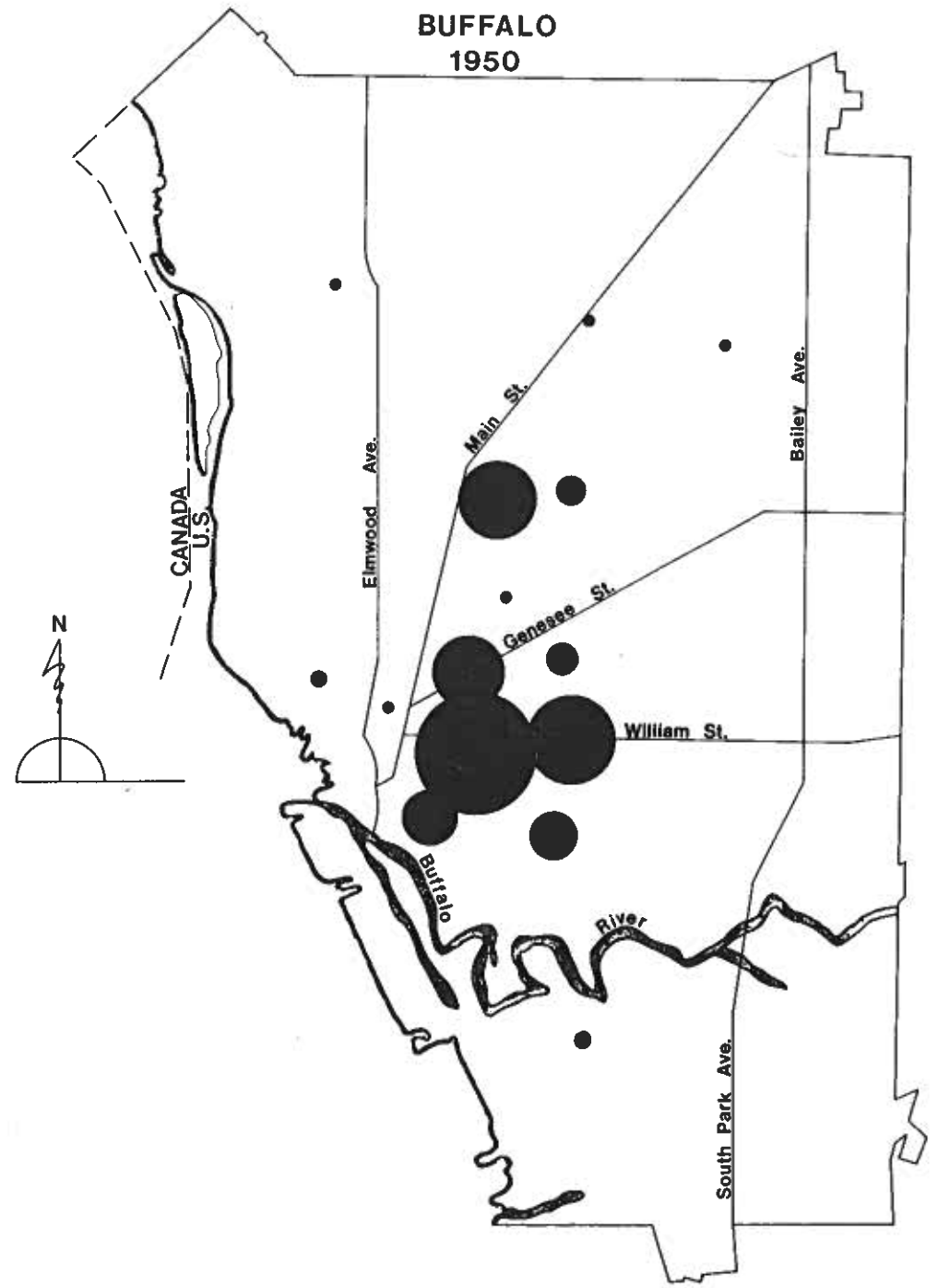
the same circles for all the maps had been within a group, most of the maps would have had circles in the legend that were difficult to see.

Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216



Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

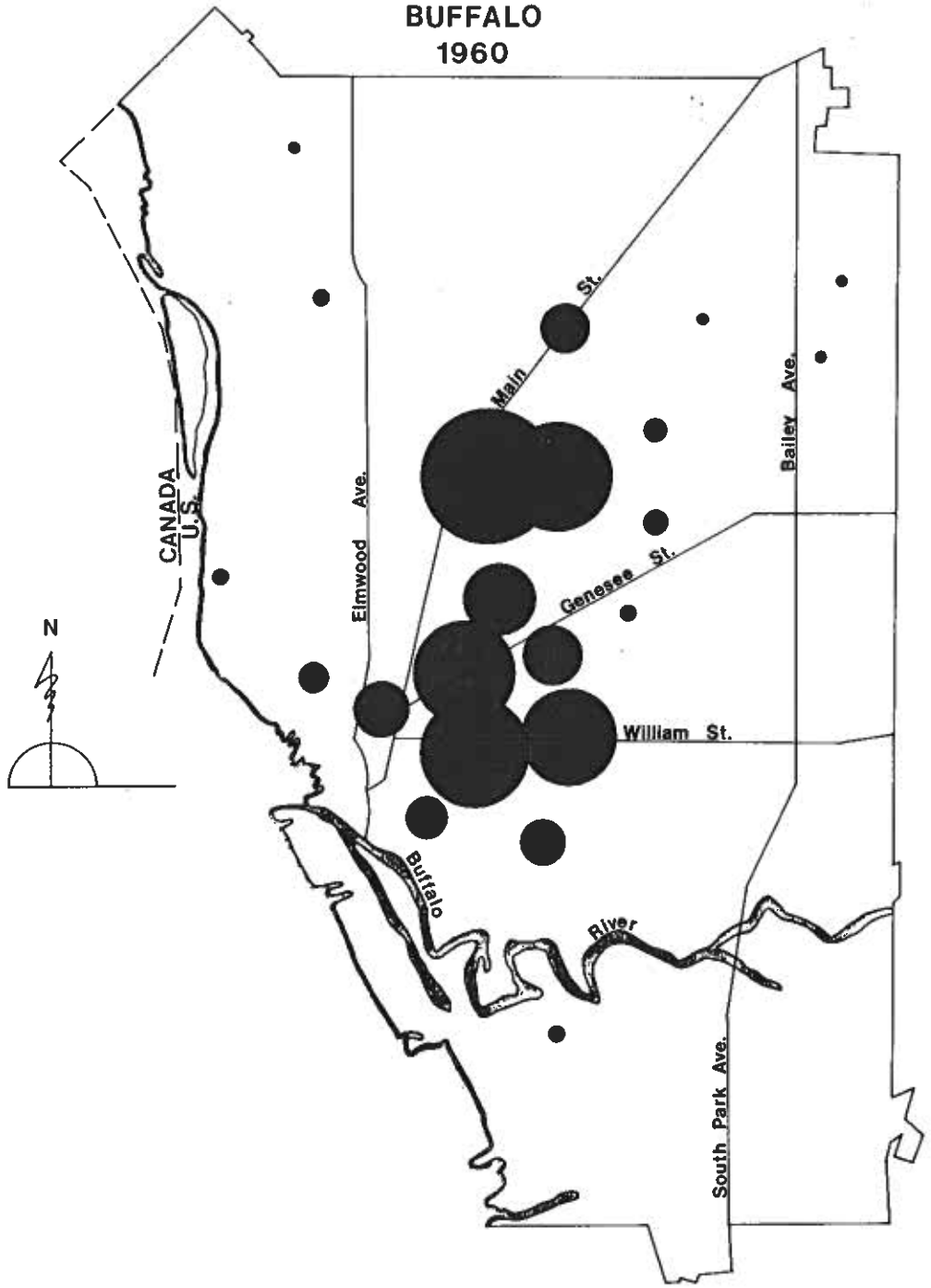
BLACK POPULATION in BUFFALO 1950



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

BLACK POPULATION in BUFFALO 1960



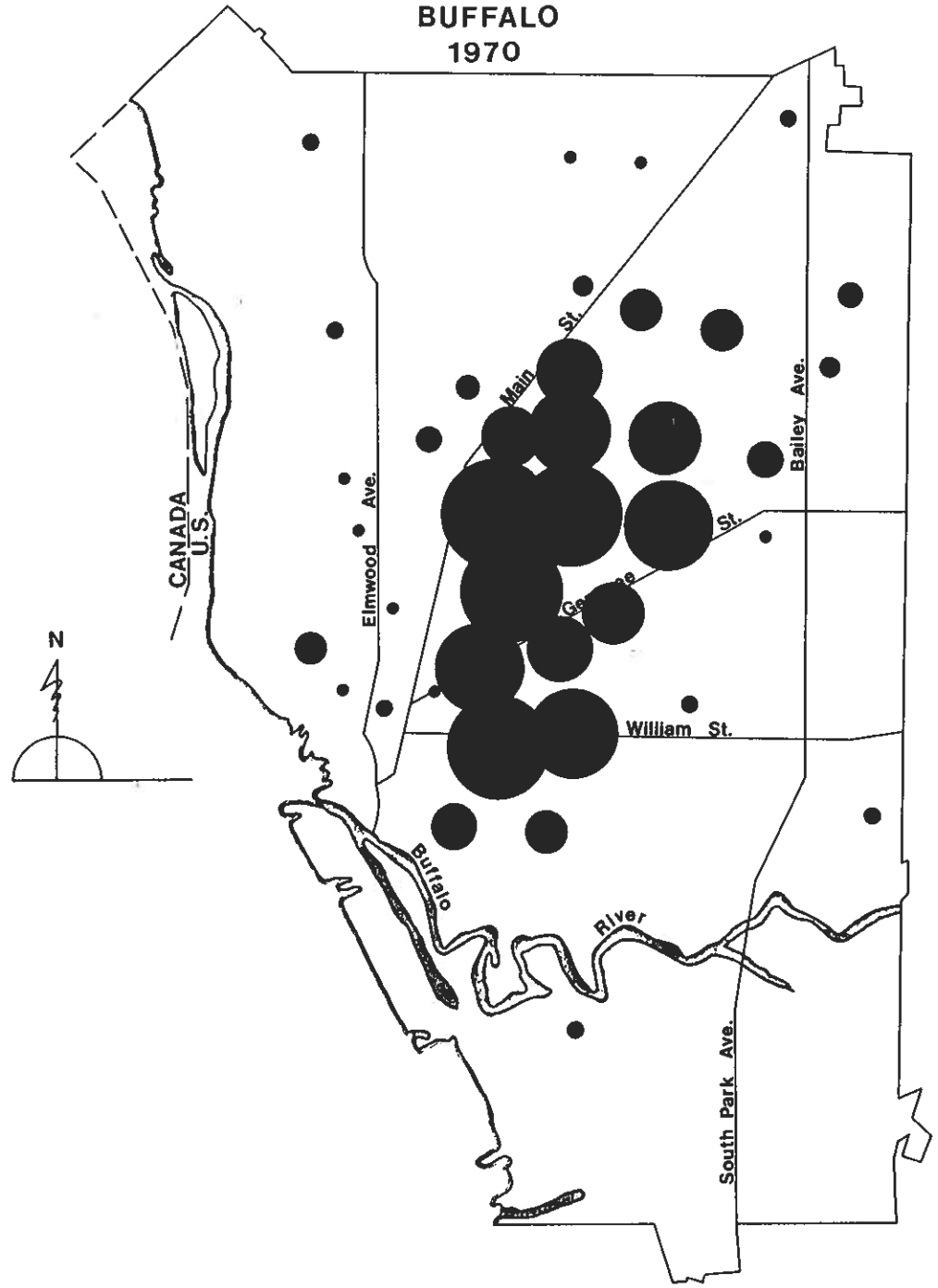
APPROXIMATE BLACK POPULATIONS

150 1500 9000 15000

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Research Library
Buffalo Hi y Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

BLACK POPULATION in BUFFALO 1970

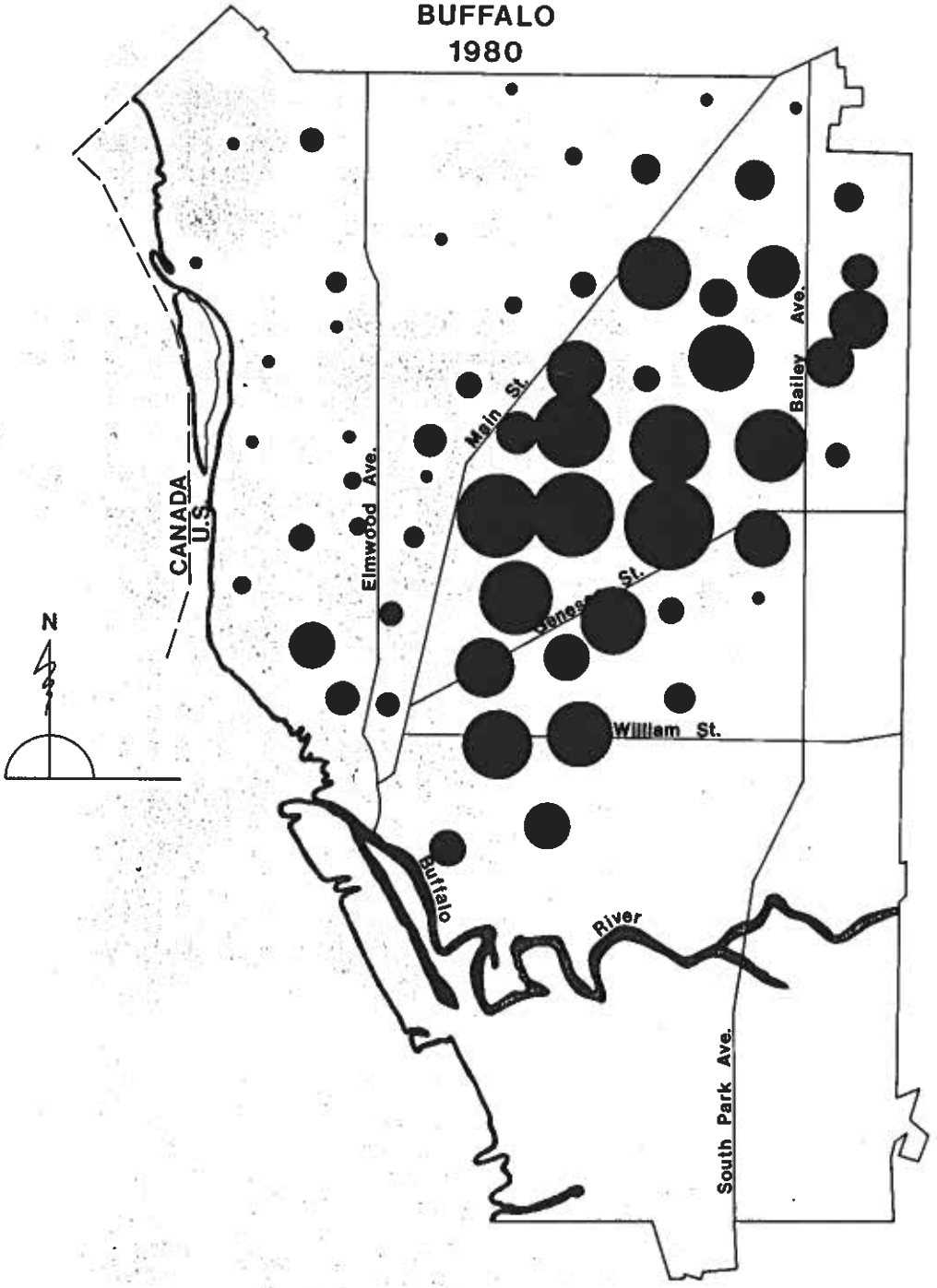


APPROXIMATE BLACK POPULATIONS

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

BLACK POPULATION in BUFFALO 1980



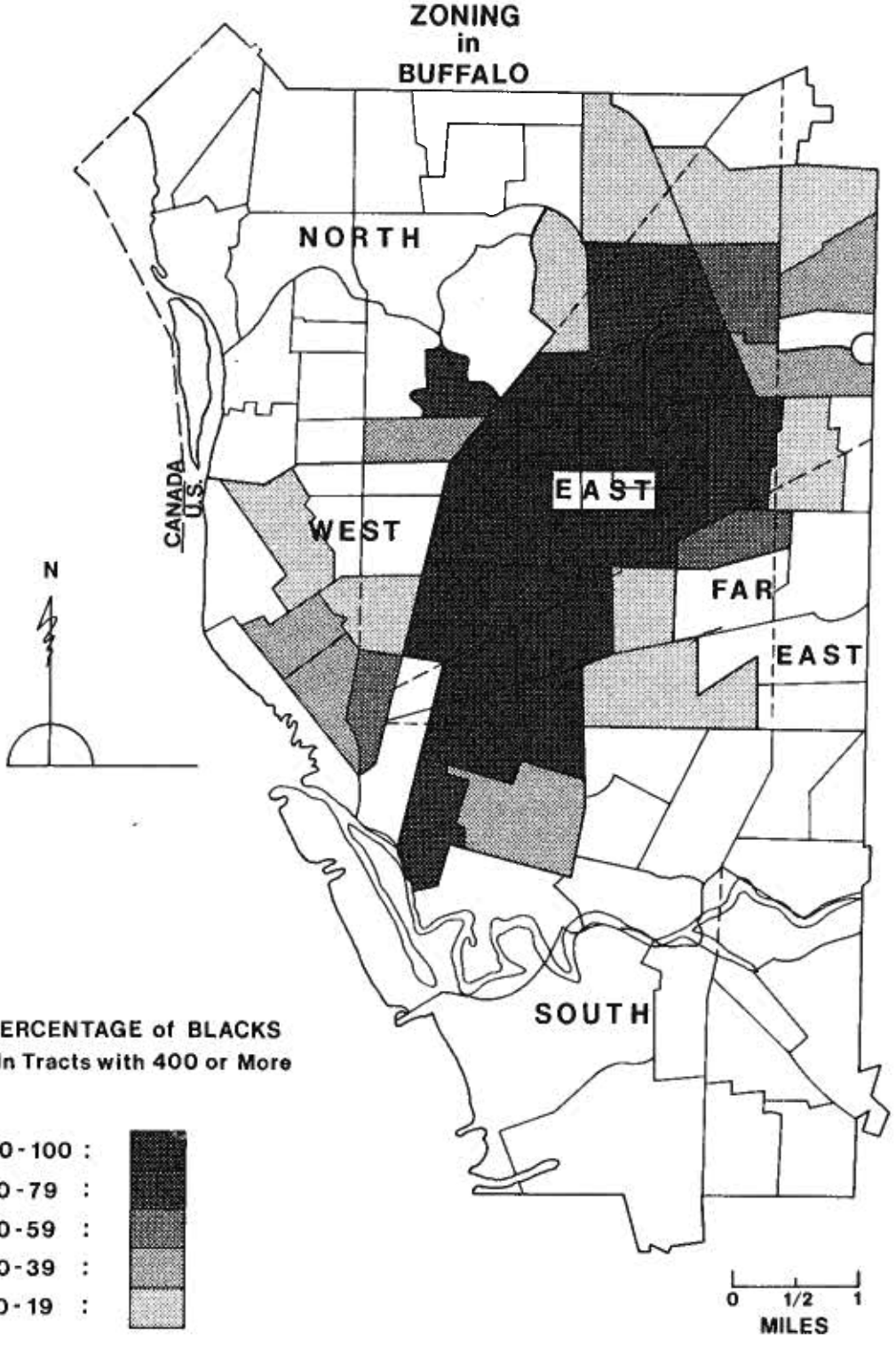
APPROXIMATE BLACK POPULATIONS

150 1500 3500 6500

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

BLACK POPULATION and ZONING in BUFFALO



PERCENTAGE of BLACKS
- In Tracts with 400 or More

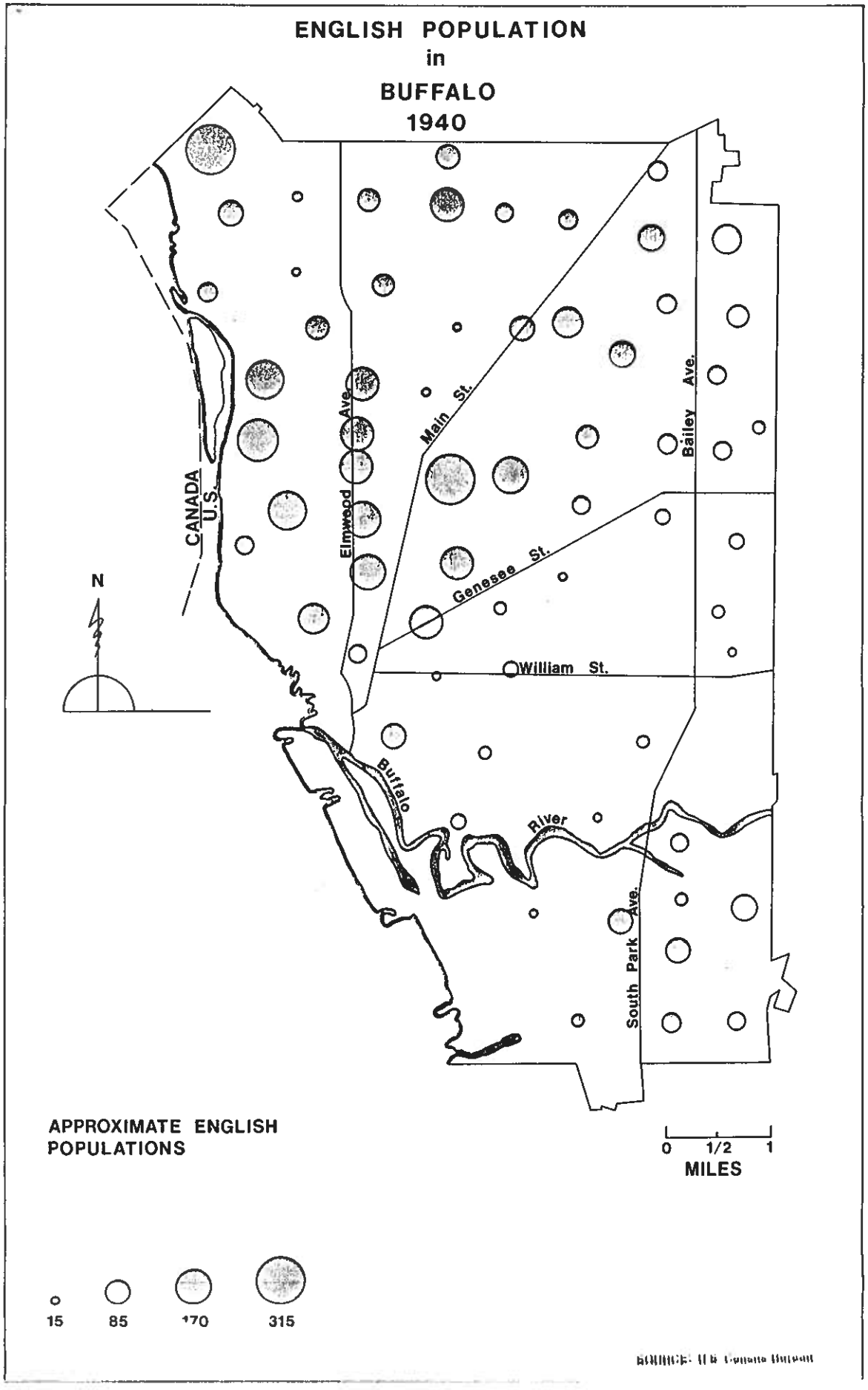
80 - 100 :
60 - 79 :
40 - 59 :
20 - 39 :
0 - 19 :

ZONE BOUNDARIES:

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

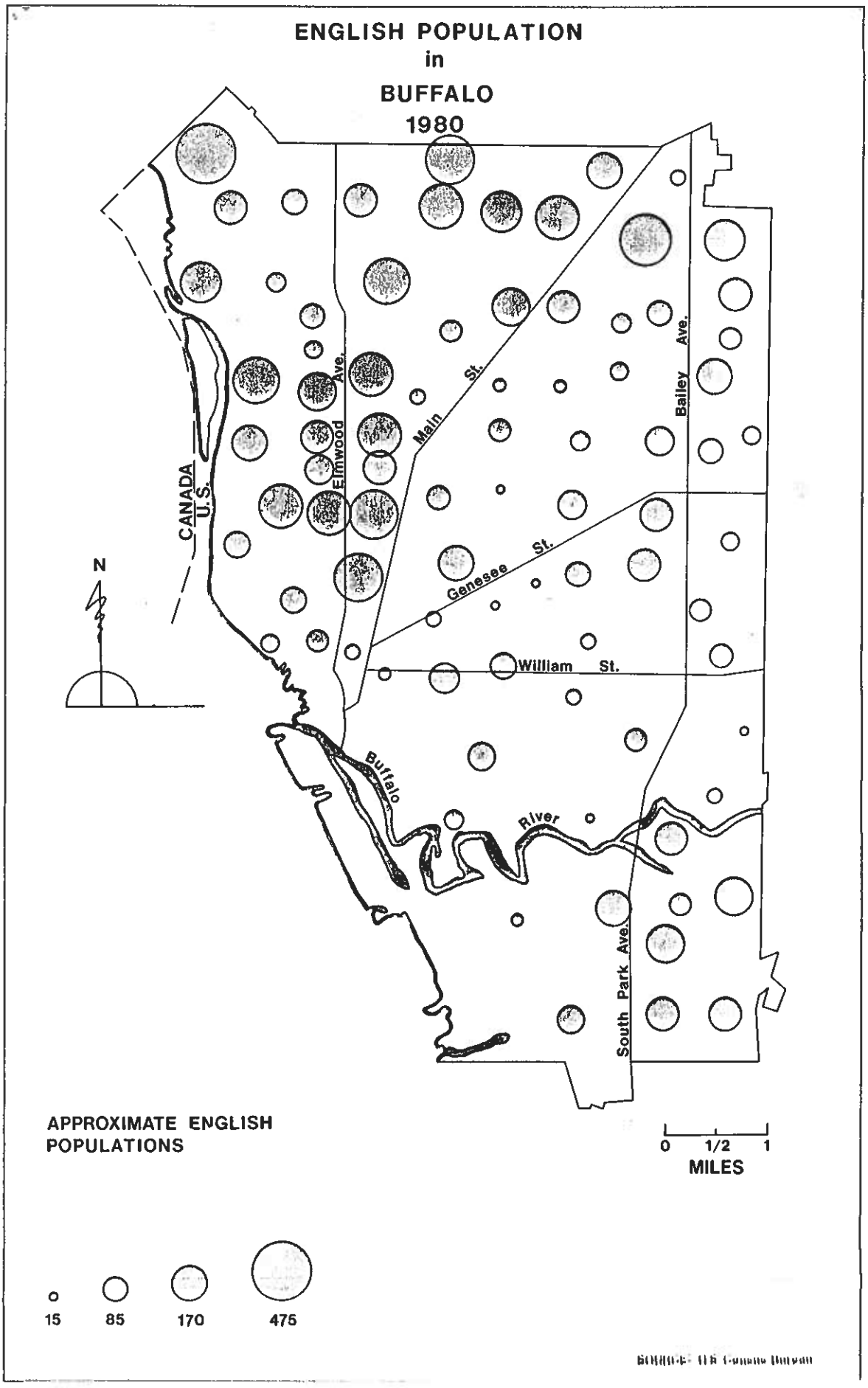
Research Library
Buffalo Hist Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

ENGLISH POPULATION in BUFFALO 1940



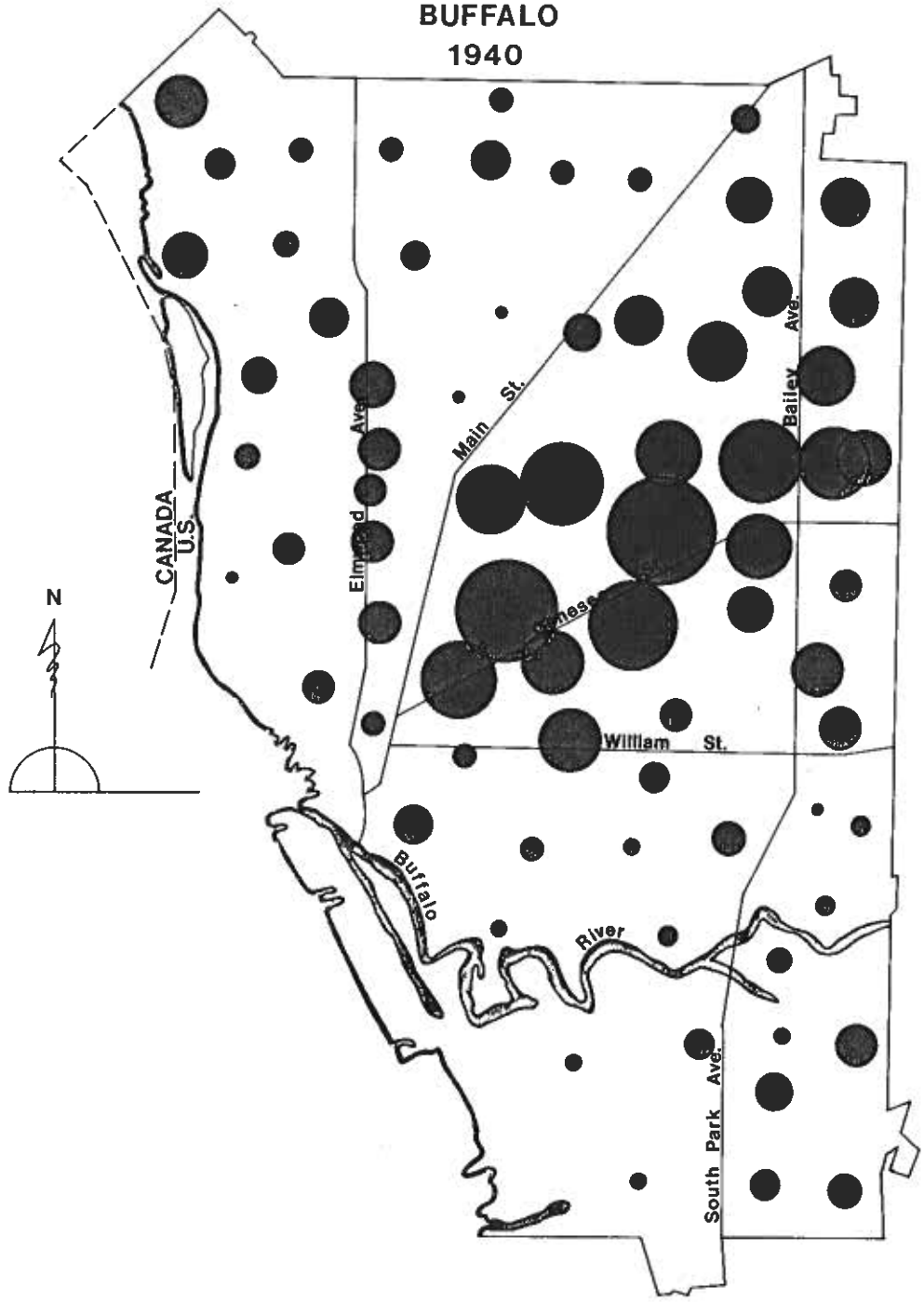
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

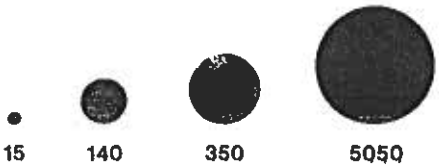


Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

GERMAN POPULATION in BUFFALO 1940

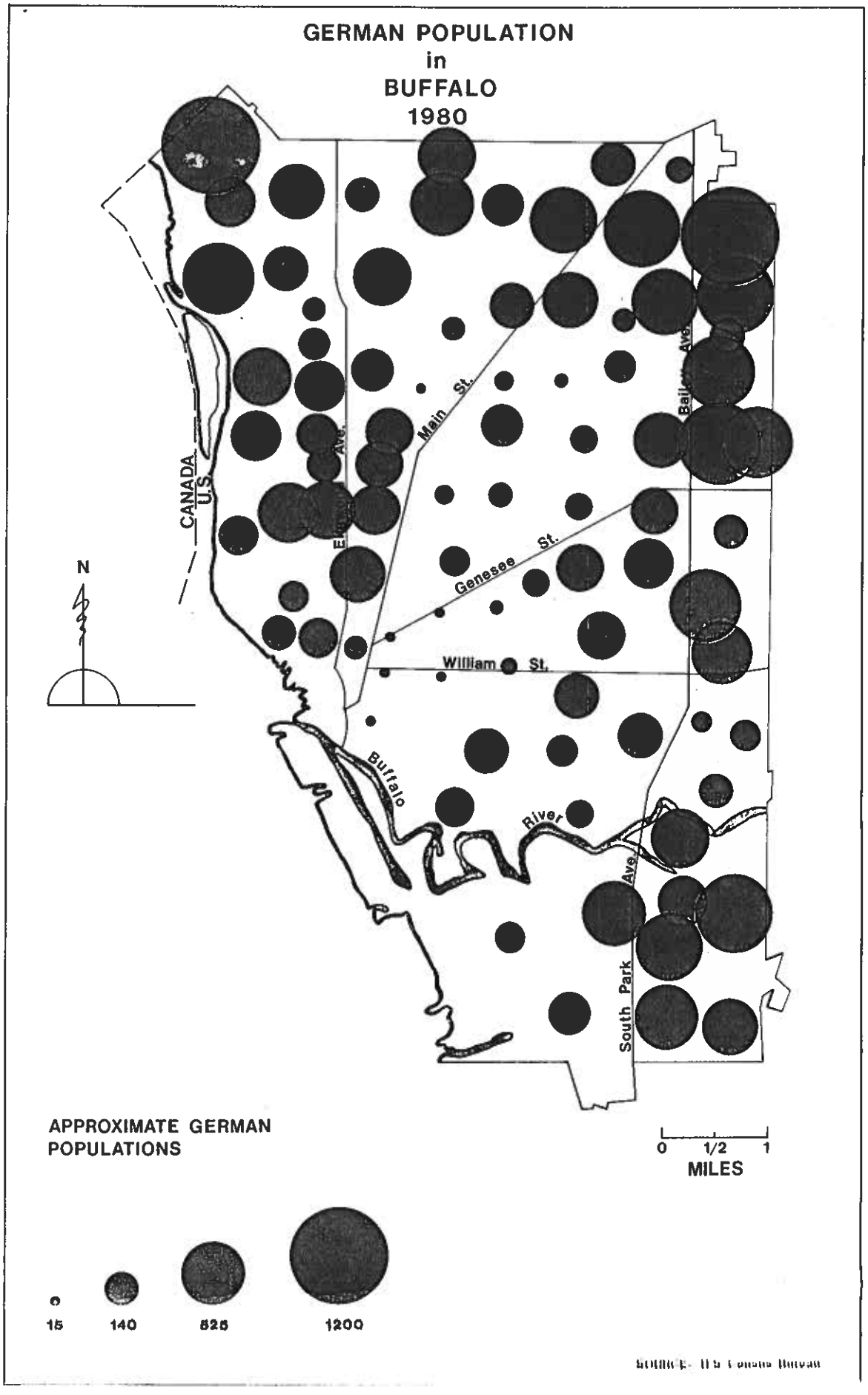


APPROXIMATE GERMAN POPULATIONS



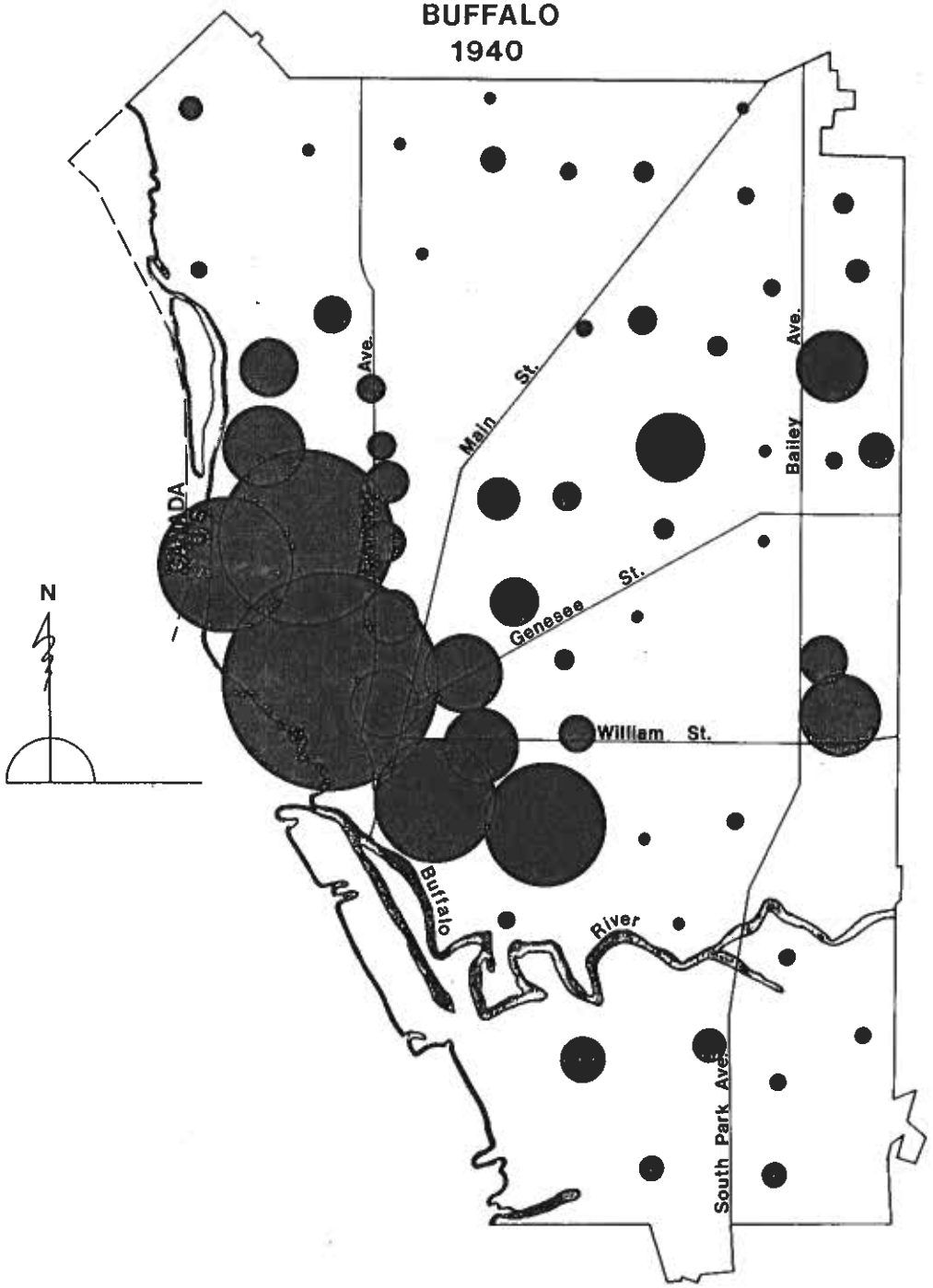
SOURCE: US Census Bureau

Research Library
Buffalo Hist Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216



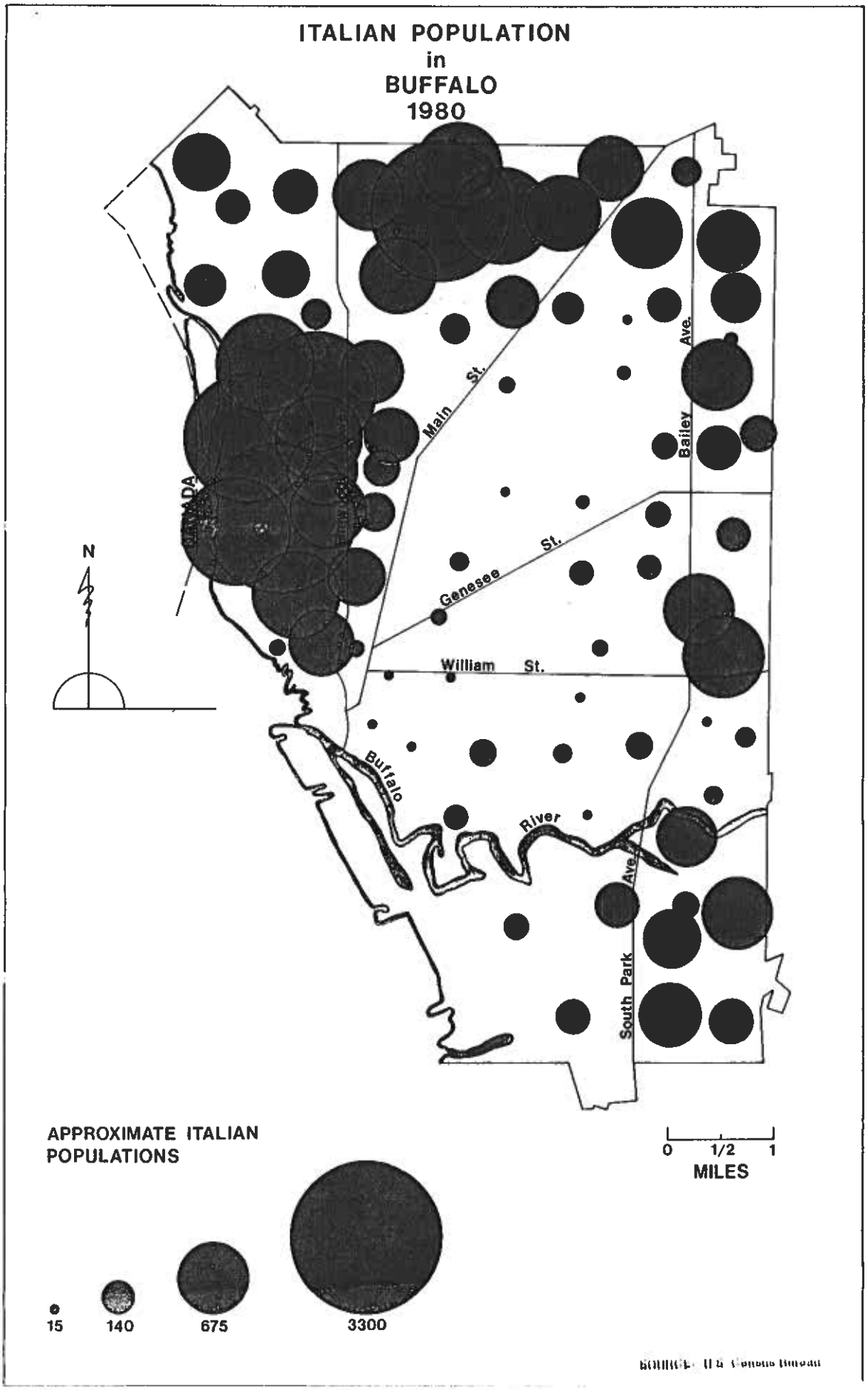
Research Library
Buffalo Histc Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

ITALIAN POPULATION in BUFFALO 1940

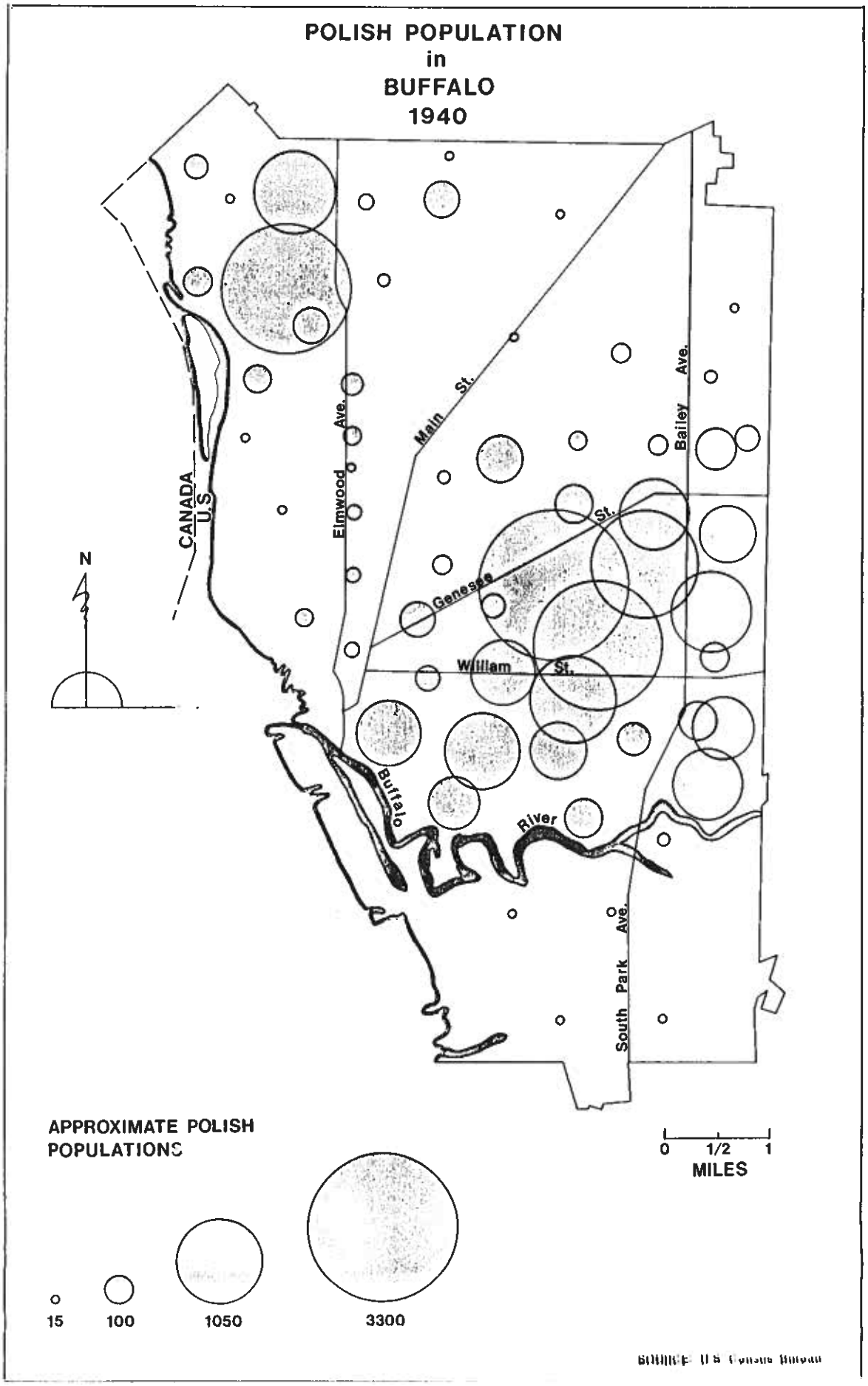


SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

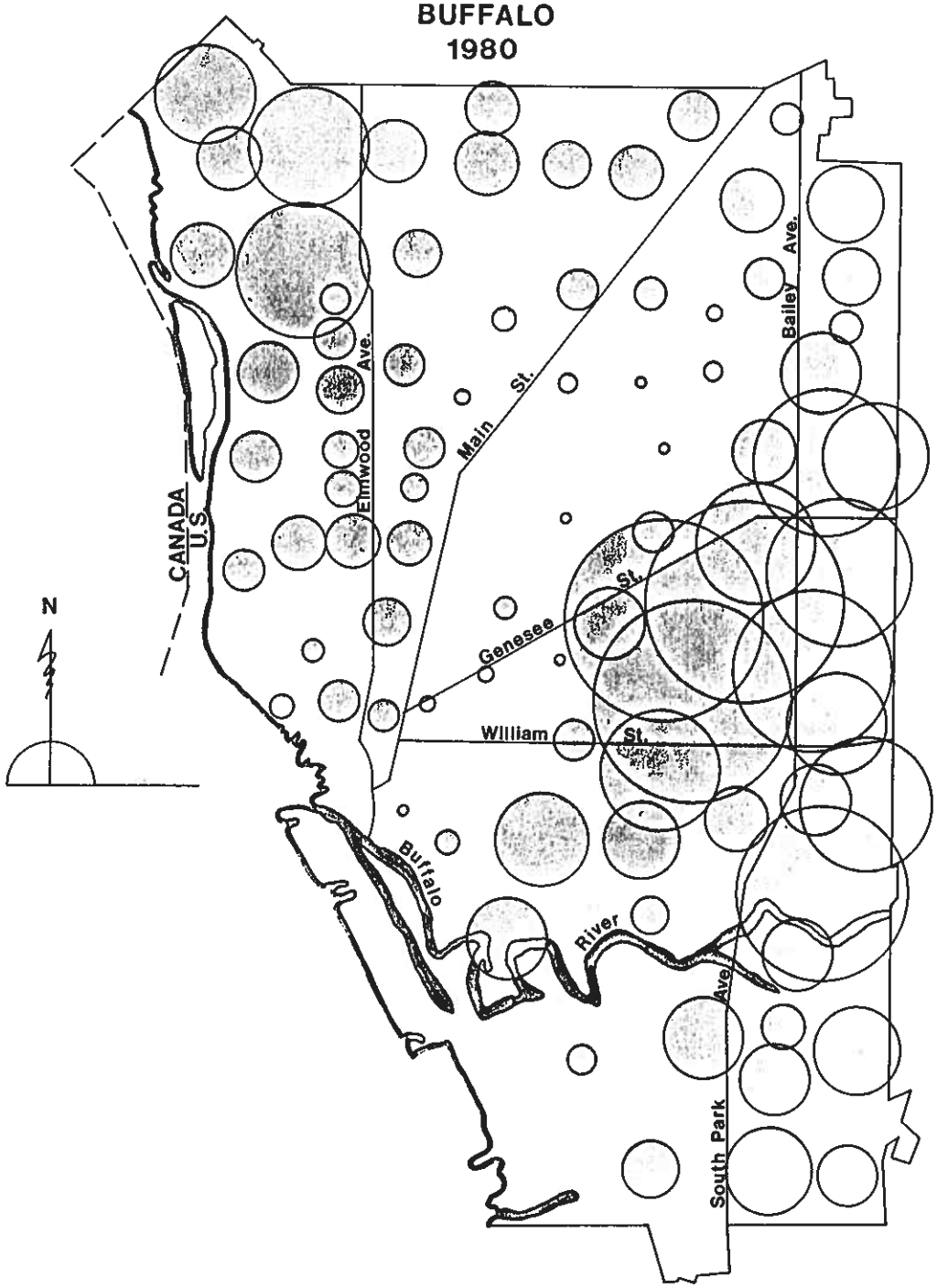


Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216



Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216

POLISH POPULATION in BUFFALO 1980



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau